

# Coming Up Roses

## Shrub roses need little upkeep, just as beautiful

by Joan Boram  
special writer

Fossils found in Europe, Asia and North America indicate that roses existed approximately 30 million years ago. The earliest representations of roses have been found on jewelry and ornaments from Minoan civilization, which flourished on the island of Crete from about 2800 to 2100 B.C. Roses have figured prominently in literature and art ever since; the rose windows of the great cathedrals of Europe are the most famous examples.

Roses are one of the oldest cultivated ornamental plants in our gardens. A good reason for this is that members of the species *rosa* grow in almost every climate, from the equator to the Arctic Circle. Closer to home, there is scarcely a flower gardener who doesn't have a rose bush or two, and many gardeners have dozens of roses and very little else.

Hybrid teas have been a rose lovers' favorite ever since they were introduced in 1867, and their popularity is as strong as ever today. However, many gardeners are learning to appreciate the qualities of shrub roses.

While these hardy bushes will probably never overtake the teas, sales are increasing every year.

"They're low maintenance plants," says Loren Blum, who orders at least 300 varieties of roses for the English Gardens stores from his base in West Bloomfield. "They don't have to be pruned, except for a little shaping here and there. And you don't have to cover them in the winter, although it's wise to mulch them after the first hard frost."

Another quality grower appreciates, he says, is the striking mass of bloom. While some plants offer a lavish display

of blooms all at one time, some flowers continue to bloom the rest of the season.

Rather than planting one bush here and one bush there, Blum says some people are planting them as flowering hedges. He also surmises that home owners are compensating for smaller gardening areas by cramming in more plants, and shrub roses are easily combined with other shrubs or flowering perennials. Floribundas are ideal roses to mix with other plants — the flowers grow in clusters and are born continuously and in profusion.

Delphiniums, liatris, phlox, foxglove, coral bells, baby's breath, heather and lavender are all delicate flowers that complement roses. Old-fashioned flowers with

muted colors are not only ideal rose companions, but together they make up a cottage garden, which Blum says is making a comeback in many modern gardens.

However, he adds, make sure that these, or any plants, must be planted far enough apart so they do not block, crowd, or distract attention from the roses.

"Annuals such as bachelor's button, alyssum and annual chrysanthemums in pastel colors go well with roses," he says, "but avoid flashier annuals such as zinnias, which will overwhelm roses."

British hybridizer David Austin has developed a series of extremely popular modern "Old English" shrub-type roses. Blum has doubled 1993 quantities of the fragrant plants.

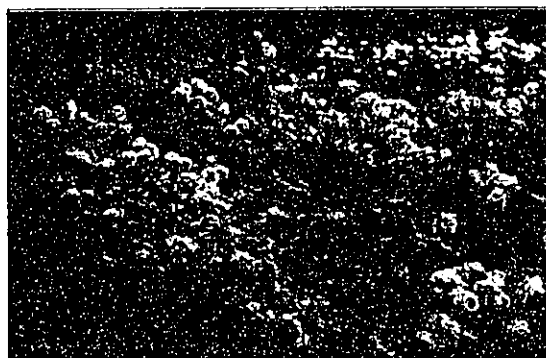
"Fragrance is being bred

back into roses," Blum says. "It's been missing for a long time. One rose in a catalog is described as 'smelling like cheap perfume.' I don't know if that's an asset or not."

Old garden roses, which have been in cultivation since before the development of the modern hybrid rose, are regaining some of the popularity they enjoyed in earlier times. In general, old roses are hearty and fragrant.

"The only problem with the antique roses is that people want to spray them," Blum says. "And they have a negative reaction to chemical sprays. Most old roses are naturally disease-resistant, but people feel they have to spray them."

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Shrub roses, such as these offered by Jackson and Perkins, are easy to care for, and just as pretty as tea roses. While some offer such a lavish display like this all at once, you can find bushes that will bloom all season.

# Scented geraniums, unusual gingers and other rarities highlight annual perennial sale

New variations on treasured garden favorites will be the highlight of this year's Spring Perennial Sale sponsored by the Friends of Matthaei Botanical Gardens in Ann Arbor.

The sale, scheduled for April 29 and May 1 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the gardens, will feature more than 20,000 plants to entice both the novice and the sophisticated gardener.

This annual springtime fundraiser includes old favorites such as wildflowers, perennials for both sun and shade, herbs and scented geraniums. The sale will also offer rock garden plants, ferns, ornamental grasses, ground covers, roses, vines, flowering baskets and biennials.

Several new cultivars of old favorites such as climbing clematis vines, unique iris cultivars, biennials, unusual gingers and an assortment of hanging baskets will be available. Also a main feature are the various cultivars of scented geraniums, including fragrant almond, lemon balm, pink champagne and orange.

Through the spring perennial sale, experts will be on hand to answer your questions.

Friday evening on April 29, from 3-7 p.m. is the members pre-sale. If you want to become a member of the Friends of Matthaei Botanical Gardens, you can join at the door and have first pick of the plants before the sale opens to the public.

The Matthaei Botanical Gardens is located at 1800 N. Dixboro Rd. in Ann Arbor, 1/2 mile south of the Plymouth Rd. intersection. There is no admission fee and parking is free. For information about the sale, call (313) 998-7061.

